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ABSTRACT

This document sets forth the recommendations made by Connecticut's State Education Commissioner for improving the State's schools and outlines the legislative action taken by the General Assembly in response. The issues dealt with fall into seven broad categories: (1) improving teaching; (2) addressing early childhood education; (3) improving educational assessment and assistance; (4) setting higher standards; (5) increasing time (and better use of time) spent in school; (6) examining the delivery of vocational education services; and (7) enhancing educational opportunities for adults. Each issue is considered separately, and information is provided on background, recommendations, implementation, appropriations, staff responsibility, and contacts. The paper also includes comprehensive lists of the advisory and study committees formed as a result of the Commissioner's report. (KH)

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UPDATE: CONNECTICUT'S CHALLENGE

Implementation of Recommendations
Presented in
Connecticut's Challenge:
An Agenda for Educational Equity and Excellence

10 August 1984

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INTRODUCTION

On 4 January 1984, the State Board of Education met to act upon a series of recommendations from Education Commissioner Gerald N. Tirozzi. The recommendations were contained in a document entitled Connecticut's Challenge: An Agenda for Educational Equity and Excellence. The Board's action led to the drafting of legislation that would affect the nearly one thousand public schools in Connecticut, tens of thousands of teachers and administrators, and a half million students now in the public schools. During the next four months, the General Assembly grappled with the issues presented by the proposed legislation, and ultimately adopted most of the recommendations. Some were adopted with amendments; two proposals were rejected.

Update: Connecticut's Challenge spells out the results of this important year of education legislation in Connecticut. It presents the issues as they were originally organized in the first document, adds the action by the General Assembly, including appropriated funds, and outlines the department's plans for implementation. This document also presents for the first time comprehensive lists of the committees formed as a result of the Challenge. Committee members, chairwomen, chairmen, and staff names and telephone numbers are included with each list. These committees will carry forward the work of the Challenge by continuing to study issues that affect Connecticut's schools.

The General Assembly acted upon the legislation with the benefit of informed criticism, discussion and support of many individuals across the state. Teachers, principals, parents, students and many others became involved directly -- some for the first time -- in the process of changing laws. In addition to the new legislation which resulted, the process itself served to heighten the importance of education to Connecticut as public awareness of the issues grew. The Board and the Department of Education are deeply indebted to the many groups and individuals who joined the debate on this critical aspect of Connecticut's future.

INITIATIVE: IMPROVING TEACHING

ISSUE: HOW TO ENSURE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

The professional competence of those entering and remaining in teaching has become a serious concern. Connecticut formed three study groups concerning the issue of professional competence in the summer of 1982.

The groups, consisting of representatives from business, industry, public and private sector agencies, higher education and elementary and secondary education, are called the Distinguished Citizens Task Force on Quality Teaching, The Committee on the Revision of Procedures and Standards for Teacher Preparation Program Approval and the Certification Advisory Council. Their charge has been to make recommendations on the actions needed to ensure that the most talented, sensitive and skillful individuals are attracted, prepared and certified to work in education in Connecticut. A fourth group, the Professional Development Council, which was convened in 1981, was asked to continue its work under the charge to develop guidelines to help districts maintain highly competent professionals in their schools. Finally, the Teacher Examination Development Panel began its work in early 1983.

The issues and recommendations contained in this section summarize the reports from these groups. Most of the following proposals relate to administrators as well as teachers.

ISSUE: HOW TO ATTRACT HIGH QUALITY INDIVIDUALS TO EDUCATION

The report of the Distinguished Citizens Task Force on Quality Teaching included the following recommendations. While this report has not been adopted by the State Board of Education, many of its recommendations are related to the issues contained herein.

1. That teachers' starting salaries be made competitive with salaries earned by persons with comparable skills in the private sector.

2. That salaries of the experienced teachers and administrators be comparable to those earned by individuals with similar training, experience and expertise in the private sector.

3. That the State Board of Education and local boards of education establish ladders that will recognize the expertise and performance of teachers.

4. That Connecticut school districts enact specific policies to encourage the retention of quality teachers, including summer work, flexible employment and benefit options, reduction of stressful conditions, and the return of retired teachers to the classroom.

5. That the State Board of Education, the Board of Governors of Higher Education, and local school boards provide funds to create or improve professional development programs for educational personnel.

6. That a statewide system of cooperative efforts between businesses and education be established to enrich the public school curriculum and to provide increased opportunities for the co-employment of teachers by the corporate sector and education.

7. That the State Board of Education, working cooperatively with the Board of Governors for Higher Education and with local school districts, take specific steps to attract academically superior high school and college students into the teaching profession and to provide them with teacher preparation programs of high quality.

8. That the state allocate resources for a public information campaign aimed at improving the public image of the teaching profession.

These recommendations provide the framework for specific responses to issues which must be addressed to improve teaching.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The State Board of Education did not adopt the full package of recommendations, but approved many of them elsewhere in the Challenge.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

Robert Margolin, Associate Commissioner, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
Betty Sternberg, Chief, Bureau of Curriculum and Staff Development

CONTACT:

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ISSUE: HOW TO STRENGTHEN THE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF EDUCATORS

BACKGROUND:

The number of academically talented students entering the teaching profession continues to decline. In many instances, performance on college entrance examinations and grade point averages during the first two years of college indicate that more individuals entering teacher education programs today come from the lowest academic ranks at colleges and universities. Furthermore, many teacher training programs are criticized for poor curriculum, out-of-date training methods and lack of emphasis on important teaching competencies.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the State Board of Education adopt a new set of standards and procedures for approving teacher preparation programs at higher education institutions in Connecticut.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The State Board of Education approved the new standards and procedures and a two-year phase-in plan. No legislative action was required. The implementation plan was devised to allow more preparation time for certain standards requiring planning and/or additional staff. The final date by which all changes will be made is December 1985.

The procedures and standards are based on the following assumptions: (a) that a teacher preparation program must provide rigorous background in one's chosen field, (b) that the program must prepare educators to meet the practical demands their positions will place upon them in the schools, (c) that the program must establish mutually beneficial relationships with the public schools, (d) that the program must be supported by its college or university, and (e) that entrance requirements must include an examination of competency in reading, writing and mathematics.

1984-85 APPROPRIATION:

$115,000

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

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ISSUE: HOW TO UPDATE AND STRENGTHEN THE CERTIFICATION REGULATIONS

BACKGROUND:

The present system of certification does not address actual teaching competence or classroom performance. And it does not provide any incentive for ongoing or even periodic growth and renewal. In general, certification regulations bear only a tenuous relationship to the skills and personal qualities which enable effective teaching. Thus, what is needed is a certification process that will: (a) make certification more responsive to actual needs, (b) incorporate the demonstration of specific competencies into the certification process, (c) ensure ongoing, professional growth for all educational personnel, and (d) provide elements of a career ladder for teachers.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Connecticut's teacher certification regulations be amended to establish a four-tier system including initial, provisional, professional and master certificates. The system would make professional development a condition for maintaining certification. It would also provide for alternate routes to the initial and provisional levels of certification.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The State Board of Education approved the recommendations in principle, yet directed the Certification Advisory Council to continue its work and:

a) Refine the concepts and implementation of the beginning teaching program.
b) Review the specific requirements for the professional certificate and the concept of continuing education as tied to certification, and
c) Reconsider the master teacher concept and its place in the certification process.

The Certification Advisory Council is expected to present its final report to the State Board of Education in November 1984. If necessitated by Board action, legislation may be submitted to the 1985 session of the General Assembly. (See Council list, p. 6.)

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

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Superintendent
Greenwich Public Schools

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University of Connecticut

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Nathan Hale Ray Middle School
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Former State Representative
New Haven

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Rosa Quezada
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Calpurnia Rogers
Kindergarten Teacher
Glastonbury Public Schools

Michael Sorrentino
President
Greater Bridgeport Labor Council

Edward V. Vargas
Executive Vice President
Connecticut State Federation of Teachers

Jakie Wills
Elementary Teacher
Stratford Public Schools

Judith P. Wolfson
Director, Strategic Planning
Individual Financial Service Division
Connecticut General Life Insurance Co.

ISSUE: HOW TO IMPROVE THE RETENTION AND CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS

BACKGROUND:

The quality of education is inextricably linked to the commitment and dedication of its personnel. Low status, non-competitive salaries and lack of opportunity for advancement within the teaching profession are causing widespread dissatisfaction. Also, although it is universally agreed that educators should maintain their skills and grow as professionals throughout their careers, the overall picture in Connecticut shows a serious lack of consistency and commitment to professional development.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Connecticut school boards enact policies such as those recommended by the Distinguished Citizens Task Force on Quality Teaching to encourage the retention of quality teachers. (See page 2.)

That Connecticut school districts be required to plan and provide ongoing and systematic professional development for educators.

That the Department of Education establish and fund summer and school-year institutes of professional development for educators.

That a system be established to enrich business and education through cooperative arrangements as was recommended by the Distinguished Citizens Task Force on Quality Teaching. (See page 2.)

IMPLEMENTATION:

The General Assembly enacted Public Act 84-314 establishing a state-run institute of professional development for Connecticut teachers and administrators. The Institute of Teaching and Learning opened in the summer of 1984 with 24 session offerings and will continue year-round.

The new law also requires school districts to submit professional development plans by 1 April 1986 to the State Department of Education.

The State Board of Education in May adopted "Guidelines for Local School District Professional Development Programs." Copies of the law and guidelines were mailed to superintendents.

A series of six regional workshops will be held across the state to help districts develop and implement their professional development plans in accordance with the new law.

1984-85 APPROPRIATION:

$500,000

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

Robert Margolin, Associate Commissioner, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
Betty Sternberg, Chief, Bureau of Curriculum and Staff Development

CONTACT:

Marjorie Bradley, 566-5409

ISSUE: HOW TO ATTRACT THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST TO TEACHING

BACKGROUND:

The limited attraction to the teaching profession affects not only those already in the work force but those entering it. Statistics show that the average student considering a job in the education field scores below average on standardized tests. It is essential that the teaching profession attract the best and the brightest students if we are to ensure the future of education in Connecticut.

RECOMMENDATION:

That a state academic scholarship loan program be established to recruit outstanding students who might otherwise not enter the teaching profession. Scholarship loans would be offered to the top 25 percent of Connecticut's public and private school students who attend a four-year college with plans to enter teaching. The loans, up to $5,000 per year per student, would be forgiven upon completion of five years of successful teaching in Connecticut public schools.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The General Assembly established the loan program in Public Act 84-513, but amended the proposed legislation by allowing loan recipients who subsequently teach in either public schools, or private and parochial schools to be eligible for loan forgiveness. The Legislature also set $3,000 as the maximum annual loan for a student attending a public college or university, while maintaining $5,000 as the maximum for a student attending a private university.

The Board of Governors for Higher Education will administer the loan program, while the Department of Education will assist in the selection of scholars and assessing the progress of the program.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

Board of Governors for Higher Education
John J. Siegrist, Director of Student Financial Aid, 566-2618

CONTACT:

Pascal Forgione, Chief, Bureau of Research, Planning and Evaluation, 566-3577

ISSUE: HOW TO RAISE TEACHERS' SALARIES

BACKGROUND:

Salaries for teachers historically have been lower than for professionals of comparable training in other fields. This fact has contributed to what is now a gross disparity between the salaries of teachers and salaries of other professionals. Few would argue against the notion that the noncompetitive starting salaries of teachers reduce the number of people who select teaching as a career. Low salaries also reduce the level of quality among those who do select teaching. This critical factor has caused many parents to cease advising, and students to cease choosing, a teaching career despite the many intangible rewards of the teaching profession.

Recent reports also have demonstrated that experienced teachers are leaving the classroom for more lucrative jobs at an alarming and increasing rate. Many of those leaving are among the most capable in the profession.

The conclusions to be drawn are clear. Teachers' starting and continuing salaries must be made competitive with those earned by persons with comparable skills and training in the private sector. It is easier to identify the problem than it is to develop a viable solution. No other issue currently facing education involves the complexities of balancing federal, state and local responsibilities for funding with the imperative to compensate teachers adequately.

RECOMMENDATION:

That a commission of citizens be charged with making specific recommendations concerning raising teachers' salaries. Recommendations would include public and private sources of funding for salaries. The commission should examine the recommendations of the Distinguished Citizens Task Force on Quality Teaching.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The State Board of Education requested that Governor William O'Neill appoint the commission. The Governor is expected to announce his selections and issue a charge by fall 1984. If appropriate, legislation may be presented to the 1985 session of the General Assembly.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTACT:

Robert Lamitie, Associate Commissioner, Division of Educational Administration, 566-7546

INITIATIVE: ADDRESSING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ISSUE: HOW TO PROVIDE EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT AN EARLY AGE

BACKGROUND:

"The State Board of Education commits itself to the goal of ensuring that all of Connecticut's young children will have access to quality early learning experiences." This, as part of the Board's 1981 policy statement on early childhood education, sets the stage for the further development of services for Connecticut's youngest learners. The policy is rooted in the belief that an early investment in children will yield important benefits for later learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the General Assembly lower the age of compulsory school attendance from seven to five years of age.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The General Assembly did not adopt this proposal.

CONTACT:

Carolyn Lester, 566-5582

ISSUE: HOW TO GIVE OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS A BETTER START

BACKGROUND:

Since 1967, the Connecticut General Statutes have mandated that school districts offer kindergarten programs of at least 2 1/2 hours a day for 180 days annually to children who attain the age of five by January 1 of the school year. Research data indicate that the early years of a child's life are critical for building a secure foundation for present and future learning. Early childhood education plays a role, not only in the social, emotional and physical development of the child, but also in the development of critical cognitive skills. The experience of children who enter kindergarten today is different from those of a decade ago due largely to the increase in the number of children who have attended pre-kindergarten programs (many full-day), from greater exposure to a variety of learning experiences, from technological advances both inside and outside the home and from changing family lifestyles. The traditional 2 1/2-hour kindergarten program can no longer provide for the diverse array of experiential backgrounds and for the broad range of developmental needs and abilities which children bring with them upon entry in school. The kindergarten program must provide for individualized and group instruction in ways which will address all aspects of every child's needs at his/her level into the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the length of the kindergarten day be extended from half day (at least 2 1/2 hours) to full-day (at least four hours).

That local school districts be required to provide program alternatives, including half-day programs, to meet children's differing needs.

That the Department of Education assist local school districts establish viable full-day kindergarten programs and program alternatives by developing a kindergarten curriculum guide, identifying model programs and providing technical assistance.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The General Assembly did not adopt this proposal.

CONTACT:

Carolyn Lester, 566-5582

ISSUE: WHEN DOES EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION BEGIN?

BACKGROUND:

Each September, children from varied preschool programs begin kindergarten. Joining them are children who have not yet participated in group educational experiences. Providing services for four year olds is a way to help ensure positive initial school experiences for each child. The child's capacity for learning during the early childhood years is unequaled later in life. It is the prime time for developing positive attitudes toward learning and school. Developmental programming, parental involvement, intensive staff development and training can help make this happen.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Department of Education establish a committee to study the question of providing school programs for four-year-olds.

IMPLEMENTATION:

A committee has been convened to conduct the study. The committee is scheduled to make its recommendations in spring 1985. (See Committee list, p. 15.)

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

Robert Margolin, Associate Commissioner, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
William Gauthier, Chief, Bureau of School and Program Development

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Four Year Olds, Their Families and the Public Schools

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Parent and Early Childhood Education Consultant
Mystic

ISSUE: HOW TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS WHO POSSESS OR ARE AT RISK OF DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL HANDICAPS

BACKGROUND:

Although Connecticut law permits school districts to provide special education and related services to children of any age, services are not mandated until the school year in which the child turns three by January first. Services provided prior to age three, however, hold the promise of minimizing or eliminating certain effects of handicapping conditions, aiding the child's development and assisting the family in coping with the difficult task of raising a handicapped child. The goal is the reduction of concomitant educational problems which begin to manifest themselves in the early years of schooling.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Department of Education establish a committee to study whether services for handicapped infants and toddlers should be mandated. The committee should include a representative from the State Department of Mental Retardation.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The Committee has been established and is scheduled to make its recommendations in fall 1984. (See Committee list, p. 18.)

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

Robert Margolin, Associate Commissioner, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
William Gauthier, Chief, Bureau of School and Program Development

CONTACT:

Virginia Volk, 566-5225

Committee to Study Whether Services for Handicapped Infants and Toddlers Should be Mandated

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Coordinator, Preschool Education for the Handicapped
Southern Connecticut State University

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Principal, Highland School
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Robert La Camera
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Marie Langdon
Coordinator, Birth to Three Program
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Lana Lewis
Parent
Woodbury

Marcia Litke
Human Services Advocate
State Office of Protection and Advocacy

Diane Lombardi
Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center, Eastern Fairfield County
Bridgeport

Robert Long
Director, Children's Services
State Board of Education and Services for the Blind

Tony Maida
Coordinator, Beginnings
Cooperative Educational Services
Wilton

Deborah Nathan
Hartford Association of Retarded Citizens
Hartford

Ed Preneta
Executive Director
State Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities

Lois Rho
Director, Early Intervention Program
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Fran Roberts
Director, State Office of Child Day Care
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Terry Roberts
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Unified School District Number Three
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Linda Russell
Coordinator, Birth to Three Program
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Estelle Siker
Physician
Director of Community Health Division
State Department of Health Services

David Smith
Coordinator, Early Childhood Education Network
Eastern Connecticut Regional Educational Service Center
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Emily Spengeman
Parent
Unionville

Elizabeth Williams
Connecticut State Employees Association
State Department of Mental Retardation
North Central Regional Center
Bloomfield

Richard Wiseman
Physician
Director, Riverview School
Middletown
State Department of Children and Youth Services

INITIATIVE: IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ASSISTANCE

ISSUE: HOW TO DETERMINE MASTERY OF SKILLS FROM PRIMARY GRADES TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Student outcomes are as important as equity of access. Statewide measurement of student performance provides the only means of assessing whether all our students are progressing and acquiring skills within a reasonable time frame.

BACKGROUND:

Currently, the only statewide testing program takes place in ninth grade. This test measures students' skills, assesses the needs for additional help and examines needs and disparities statewide. But too many of our students enter secondary school deficient in basic skills; for many, remediation comes too late. In order to provide for meaningful intervention, it is critical to target individual student and district needs at a stage well before the beginning of high school. Furthermore, our expectations for our students should go beyond minimum competency: we must look to mastery as our standard.

RECOMMENDATION:

That a statewide mastery test be administered in early fall of each year to students in grades 4, 6 and 8 to assess skills in reading, mathematics and language arts, including writing. The tests would focus on learning outcomes that can be reasonably expected statewide for the three grades.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The General Assembly enacted these recommendations under Public Act 84-293 which amended the existing Education Evaluation and Remedial Assistance (EERA) statute to provide for statewide mastery testing in grades 4, 6 and 8 and to provide for the resubmission by local and regional school districts of a new EERA Plan by 1 May, 1985.

The new legislation requires the continuation of the ninth grade proficiency test and retesting of grades 10, 11 and 12 students, using the existing EERA proficiency tests, through October 1986.

Committees, representing Connecticut educators, citizens and business/industry, have been established to define the test content and test specifications and to develop recommendations on implementation policy for the new testing program. Test development and the piloting of items for grade 4 test will proceed this Fall and recommendations on new standards will be presented to the State Board in May 1985. The first grade 4 testing will occur in October 1985, with grades 6 and 8 to be incorporated in October 1986. (See Committee lists, p. 23.)

1984-85 APPROPRIATION:

$885,000

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

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Pascal Forgione, Chief, Bureau of Research, Planning and Evaluation

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MASTERY TEST COMMITTEES

Mastery Test Implementation Advisory Committee

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Superintendent
East Lyme Public Schools

Members

Mark Waxenberg
R.J. O'Brien School
East Hartford

Louis Saloom
Deputy Superintendent
Meriden Public Schools

Philip Pelosi
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Edward Reidy
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Carol Parmelee
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Middletown Public Schools

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Thompson Public Schools

Lucille Rios
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Granby Memorial High School
Granby Public Schools

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Gail Tomala

Joan Baron

Steve Leinwand

Robert Kinder

Jean Gubbins

ISSUE: HOW TO ASSIST STUDENTS NEEDING EXTRA HELP TO REACH EXPECTED GOALS

BACKGROUND:

Schools should set higher goals for students and expect students to reach them. But for those students who cannot meet goals within the expected time, additional provisions must be made. Many of this state's students will graduate or leave school without the basic skills needed to be effective workers, parents and citizens. Sadder yet, the stark truth is that this occurs with our knowledge. Students' needs go unmet not because we are unaware of them, but because sufficient resources are lacking and, often, resources are not used well.

A look at this state's schools shows that 20 to 25 percent of students, at any grade level, are deficient in basic skills. State and federal dollars support special programs for only a portion of those students. While remedial services are also provided within general education, it is clear that many of our students are simply not receiving the help they need. This fact raises the fundamental and challenging question of equity.

State funds for remedial education were cut from $7 million to $4.4 million during the 1982 legislative session.

It has become clear, through research and experience, that certain widely used approaches to remediation may not be producing the desired results. In fact, the disruptive effect of pulling students out of the classroom setting to give them "extra help" may in fact negate the potentially beneficial effects of the extra attention. The loss of continuity and classroom participation may simply contribute to the student's already diagnosed deficiencies.

It is essential that alternate approaches to remedial instruction be given serious consideration. The key to good remedial instruction is the same as that to good instruction: good teaching, good curriculum and staff development. Certain types of curricula and teaching styles appear to have a positive impact upon student achievement, facts which may radically alter the way both the Department of Education and school districts should approach the concept of remediation. It is possible that funds directed toward professional development and curriculum revision may be the best, surest and most cost-effective way to ensure student achievement.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Compensatory Education Grant should be increased from $4.4 million to $7 million. The legislation mandating remedial instruction should be amended to target funds for those students most in need of assistance.

The department should undertake to define remediation, review the many programs related to basic skills and remedial practices statewide, and, finally, develop a proposal concerning the best way to integrate the most successful remedial approaches into current programs.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The General Assembly appropriated $6.4 million for the Compensatory Education Grant.

The department established the Basic Skills Committee to study the areas outlined in the recommendation. It is scheduled to report its recommendations in November 1984. (See Committee list, p. 32.)

1984-85 APPROPRIATION:

$6.4 million

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Basic Skills Committee

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Donald Douville

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Robert Kinder

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Gail Zeil

ISSUE: HOW TO HELP SCHOOL DISTRICTS REACH EXPECTED GOALS

BACKGROUND:

As we set high expectations for our students, so must we set high goals for our school districts. And, as with students, those school districts with the greatest need should receive additional support. Certainly, equalized support for education has helped to address this issue, but disparity among programs remains great statewide. Serious questions exist about the ability of districts whose students may most need supplemental services to provide those services.

RECOMMENDATION:

That a $2 million grant be established for districts in the greatest academic need, or "priority districts. Between 10 and 20 school districts would participate. Emphasis would be placed on improving curriculum and staff through expenditure plans to be worked out between the state and the towns.

That $300,000 be distributed to the six regional educational service centers to improve instruction, particularly in mathematics and science.

That the Department of Education expand its professional services by adding one consultant in mathematics (for a total of two) and one consultant in reading (for a total of one).

IMPLEMENTATION:

The General Assembly enacted Public Act 84-265, establishing the Priority School District Program grant. It is budgeted for $2 million during 1984-85. The Legislature amended the bill by requiring that at least 30 percent of the communities participating in the program have populations of less than 50,000.

In June, the State Board of Education adopted "Guidelines for Implementing An Act Concerning the Priority School District Grant" and adopted the state 9th grade proficiency test as the criterion for designation as a priority school district. For 1984-85, the school districts of Bridgeport, Eastford, Hartford, Killingly, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, Stamford, Waterbury and Windham have been selected to participate in the program.

During July and August, the 10 priority school districts will be developing three-year action plans. Plans for 1984-85 will then be approved and grants authorized by the Commissioner. Subsequent years' grants will be based on availability of funds, the annual application and program evaluation.

The General Assembly did not approve the grant request for the regional education service centers. It did, however, approve positions for the two requested curriculum consultants.

1984-85 APPROPRIATION:

$2 million

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTACT:

Theodore Sergi, 566-8712 or 8713

INITIATIVE: SETTING HIGHER STANDARDS

ISSUE: HOW TO ENSURE DEPTH AND DIVERSITY OF SCHOLASTIC BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND:

To raise performance levels of students, we must also raise standards. As in many other states, it has become clear that in Connecticut, the assurance that all high school graduates have had adequate preparation in those areas universally deemed important can come only through statewide graduation requirements. The establishment of graduation requirements is a critical component of the raising of standards at the high school level. Connecticut never had a statewide graduation requirement prior to the 1983 session of the General Assembly, and the recently established mandate requires only a minimum of eighteen credits (a credit is defined as a 40-minute class period for every day of the school year) beginning with the class graduating in 1987. A survey completed in May 1983 shows that only two high schools in the state had to increase current requirements (by one credit) to meet the new mandate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That, beginning with the class of 1988, graduates be required to have completed 20 credits with the following distribution of subject areas.

English - 4 credits
Mathematics - 3 credits
Social Studies - 3 credits
Science - 2 credits
The Arts - 1 credit
Physical Education - 1 credit
Elective Areas - 6 credits

That the definition of credit be changed from a course having a daily class of 40 minutes to one of 45 minutes.

That an advisory panel be established by the State Board of Education to review graduation requirements in a broader context, including the following areas:

a. More specific subject matter requirements (such as foreign languages, computers, writing or an additional year of science.)

b. Differentiated diplomas.

c. Increased credit requirements.

d. The advisability of a test requirement, such as a statewide mastery test for graduation.

e. Mandated program offerings (see p. 40).

IMPLEMENTATION:

The General Assembly passed Public Act 84-297, establishing the 20 credit minimum and implementing the distribution of subjects as recommended, with the following amendment: the law requires one credit in either the arts or vocational education. The General Assembly did not approve the extension of the required time for a credit course to 45 minutes.

The State Board of Education has appointed an advisory board to study the additional issues. An interim report from the Graduation and Course Requirements Advisory Panel is scheduled to be made to the State Board of Education in November 1984. The General Assembly appropriated $50,000 to support the activities of the Advisory Panel. (See Advisory Panel list, p. 38.)

1984-85 APPROPRIATION:

$50,000

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

Robert Margolin, Associate Commissioner, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
Betty Sternberg, Chief, Bureau of Curriculum and Staff Development

CONTACT:

Betty Billman, 566-2169
Kenneth Lester, 566-3278

Graduation and Course Requirements Advisory Panel

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Teacher
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Carol Duggan
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Gordon Fairclough
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Norwalk

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Professor of Education
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Marilyn Rocke
State Representative
Wilton

Robert Sorensen
State Representative
Meriden

Bruce Weston
Citizen
Windsor

Judith P. Wolfson
Director of Strategic Planning
Individual Financial Services Division
Connecticut General Life Insurance Co.

ISSUE: HOW TO GUARANTEE A BREADTH OF SUBJECT OFFERINGS

BACKGROUND:

As enrollments decline, it becomes more and more difficult for many districts to provide a meaningful range of offerings for students. At the same time, our world, and our knowledge base, is expanding. Section 10-16b of the Connecticut General Statutes currently mandates that public schools must offer a program of instruction which includes the arts, career educaton, consumer education, health and safety, language arts (including reading, writing, grammar, speaking and spelling), mathematics, physical education, science, social studies (including citizenship, economics, geography, government and history) and, in addition, on at least the secondary level, one or more foreign language and vocational education.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That a review be conducted of Section 10-16b to study the appropriateness of the areas listed, whether all areas should receive equal weight, whether the distinction between elementary and secondary is appropriately drawn and whether specific time allocations should be included.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The State Board of Education directed that the Graduation and Course Requirements Advisory Panel study the issues concerning section 10-16b. (See p. 38 for list.)

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

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CONTACT:

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ISSUE: HOW TO PROMOTE POLICIES THAT SUPPORT LEARNING

BACKGROUND:

Learning is hard work. It demands time and commitment on the part of the learner, as well as an environment supportive of the endeavor. It goes on before, during and after the school day.

Students must understand these essentials of scholastic life. To teach children and young adults to become responsible for their own environment and their own successes. Adults must provide a structure that makes clear both standards and expectations. This structure must go beyond the walls of the classroom to include the school as a whole and the homes in which students live and study.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the local boards of education be required to develop and adopt policies on homework, attendance, and promotion and retention.

That the Department of Education make available model policies and guidelines to assist local and regional boards of educaton in establishing their policies.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The General Assembly enacted Public Act 84-275, which requires districts to adopt such policies by July 1985.

The department has begun collecting existing district policies and will distribute models and guidelines in the fall. Superintendents were asked to send policies to the department by 15 July 1984.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

Robert Margolin, Associate Commissioner, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
William Gauthier Jr., Chief, Bureau of School and Program Development

CONTACT:

William Gauthier, 566-5079

INITIATIVE: INCREASING TIME

ISSUE: HOW MUCH TIME IS ENOUGH?

BACKGROUND:

Recent debate concerning educational reform has invited comparison of this country's public school system with those of other nations. American students spend considerably less time in school than do their counterparts internationally, a fact that may in time put our nation at a distinct disadvantage. As we move toward the 21st century, not only has our society changed but we have also seen a steady increase in the amount of knowledge students must acquire to lead productive lives. The fact is that it takes more time to absorb more knowledge.

It is also clear that the needs of teachers have changed. To remain current in their subject areas, to develop their teaching skills, to evaluate and update curriculum and to assess student needs and adjust programs accordingly, teachers must have more time available when students are not present.

Additional learning can be achieved with better use of time within the existing school day and year. Measures must be taken, however, to ensure that important activities such as professional development and program preparation do not encroach upon classroom time. Providing additional time for teachers' activities would be a significant step in enhancing instructional time for students.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the school year for teachers be extended to 190 days.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The State Board of Education directed that legislation to lengthen the teachers' school year be presented to the 1985 session of the General Assembly. This recommendation will be considered in the fall of 1984 as the Board develops its legislative proposals.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

Robert Lamitie, Associate Commissioner, Division of Educational Administration

CONTACT:

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INITIATIVE: EXAMINING THE DELIVERY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICES

ISSUE: HOW TO ENSURE THAT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS RECEIVE THE SAME KIND OF REVIEW AND ATTENTION THAT TRADITIONAL ACADEMIC AREAS ARE CURRENTLY RECEIVING.

BACKGROUND:

The State Board of Education will shortly submit a revised Master Plan for Vocational, Career and Adult Education to the General Assembly. As this Department prepares to pursue the goals and objectives set forth in the Plan, careful consideration must be given to the respective roles of the vocational-technical schools, comprehensive high schools, postsecondary occupational schools, and institutions of higher education in providing vocational programs for Connecticut youth and adults.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A study of the delivery of vocational education services should be undertaken. The study should include, but not be limited to, the grade structure, organization and governance of the state's system of vocational-technical schools and to the relationship of the vocational-technical schools to vocational programs provided in local high schools and higher education institutions.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The Vocational Education Study Committee has been established and is scheduled to make recommendations to the State Board of Education in April 1985. (See Committee list, p. 44.)

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

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Anne Wingate
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INITIATIVE: ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULTS

ISSUE: HOW TO INCREASE ADULT LITERACY AND ALLOW VOCATIONAL TRAINING TO ADDRESS THE CHANGING JOB MARKET

BACKGROUND:

Economic, labor and demographic projections all point to the rapidly increasing importance of adult education. Unless Connecticut can offer a work force with the skills demanded by today's -- and tomorrow's -- business and industry, our state will lose its competitive advantage. The median age of the population will change from 31 in 1981 to 38 by the year 2000; the largest population increase will be in the 35-34 age group, the sharpest decrease in the group age 16-24. It is clear that the retraining needs of the workforce will increase significantly. At the same time, 1980 census data indicates that 642,000 adults, or nearly 30 percent of Connecticut's adult population, do not have a high school diploma. It is time that Connecticut devote more energy and resources to the educational needs of its adult population in the areas of basic literacy, skill training and retraining.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A study committee to review the status of adult education should be convened. The study should include specific recommendations concerning both program and funding matters.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The Adult Education Study Committee has been formed and is scheduled to make its recommendation to the State Board of Education in April 1985. (See Committee list, p. 48.)

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY:

Clarence Green, Associate Commissioner, Division of Vocational and Adult Education
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